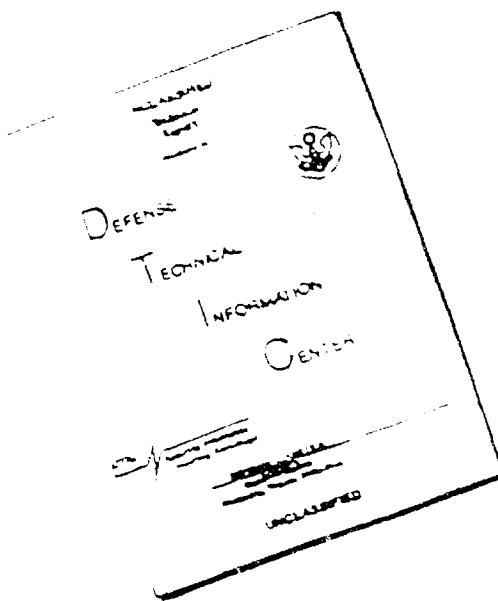


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and scope of the staff rides; to illustrate that the concept of the staff ride has some historical precedence; and conclude that the idea could be integrated into the curriculum today, while avoiding the misperception of preparing for the wrong war. The historical data suggest that the officer students gleaned much from these exercises and that it was part of a well integrated curriculum designed to teach the officers how to think, rather than what to think.

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## USAWC MILITARY STUDIES PROGRAM PAPER

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### STAFF RIDES AT THE WAR COLLEGE PRIOR TO WORLD WAR I: THEIR USE AND EFFECTIVENESS

An Individual Study Project  
Intended for Publication

by

Colonel Domenic R. Sette (Author)

Professor Jay Luvaas  
Project Adviser

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U.S. Army War College  
Carlisle Barracks, Pennsylvania 17013  
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## ABSTRACT

AUTHOR: Domenic R. Sette, COL, MI

TITLE: Staff Rides at the War College Prior to World War I:  
Their Use and Effectiveness

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The proper method of educating officers has always been a major concern of leaders in the Army. This study is designed to demonstrate the need for introducing the Staff / Historical Ride into the Army War College curriculum as a mandatory subject to teach officers how to think. It examines the historical perspective of the early architects of the officer educational system prior to World War I, and illustrates the effectiveness and use of the staff ride during this era. The purpose behind exploring the background and methodology of past staff rides is to reveal its original design; to examine the characteristics and scope of the staff rides; to illustrate that the concept of the staff ride has some historical precedence; and conclude that the idea could be integrated into the curriculum today, while avoiding the misperception of preparing for the wrong war. The historical data suggest that the officer students gleaned much from these exercises and that it was part of a well integrated curriculum designed to teach the officers how to think, rather than what to think.

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The proper method of educating future battle "captains" has been a challenge and a major concern of nations for several centuries. There are many reasons for this, beginning with the problem of definition. Historians and military leaders cannot agree on whether war is an art or science. Even one of the most recognized authorities on military thought during the 19th century, Carl von Clausewitz, could not clear the debate. He devotes an entire chapter of On War to discussing each possibility; but in frustration he concludes "that strictly speaking war is neither an art nor a science." <sup><1></sup> Clausewitz prefers instead to compare war to commerce, "which is also a conflict of human interests and activities". <sup><2></sup>

Because war is always so diverse, complex and different, it is not easily defined. It is, in fact, often defined by those who wage the war. Additionally, war serves to impose one nation's will on another, which implies the establishment of policy. In this matter, Clausewitz insists that "War is Merely the Continuation of Policy by Other Means". War is "an instrument of policy", he says. Most military professionals, however, have defined war as some sort of art form. If we accept the fact that war consists of at least more art than science, and that art has something to do with creative ability, then our best chance of understanding wars, is to study the "nature of

war", that is, its battles, campaigns and leaders. <3>

This paper will not attempt to define war. Instead, I will examine the history of the officer educational system prior to World War I. I will analyze the use and effectiveness of the tactical / staff ride at the U.S. Army War College during this era. I will show how circumstances facing the educators of the officer corps prior to World War I were much the same as they are today. Deciding on the best method of preparing officers how to think during peace today, so they are ready for war tomorrow, is a debate that continues.

The "study" of war however is necessarily limited. The professional soldier cannot routinely practice his profession like other professionals by doing the real thing. It is too costly in terms of resources. And the loss of lives renders it unthinkable. Yet the military professional must be fully trained and prepared to execute his duties immediately upon the outbreak of war. This dilemma was exacerbated by 19th century views that knowledge of the art of war could be gained only by being in a war. In other words, to know war one had to experience war. This thought "arises from the fallacious idea that war can only be taught by war itself." <4> Contrast this with the time-honored method of educators having their students memorize exactly what the text contained, with frequent examinations to reinforce the teaching points. The serious student of war would say neither method is satisfactory.

The need then is to strike a balance between trying to acquire the necessary knowledge and ability, on the one hand,

with the requisite amount of theory and practice on the other. By the turn of the century, the British Army was training officers for war through a series of practical staff rides and regimental tours on the ground without troops to complement their theoretical classroom instruction. They believed that the "officers are apt to regard everything they read or learn from books as theory, and everything they do with troops either in peace or war as practice." <sup>5</sup> The German Army too had begun to instruct their officers similarly by using practical exercises over terrain. They distinguished between "tactical rides" of one to three days and the "tactical tours", which could extend to a seven day period. They firmly believed that "the practice of working out schemes on the ground affords one of the most useful means for the tactical instruction of officers." <sup>6</sup>

At about this same time, the U.S. Army was beginning to explore these same ideas and issues regarding the education of officers for war in time of peace. One of the early pioneers in revolutionizing the way officers were taught was Lieutenant Eben Swift, who began his experience in educating and instructing officers at the Infantry and Cavalry School at Fort Leavenworth in 1893. He shared a common belief and philosophy with his first boss, Lieutenant Arthur L. Wagner. They believed "that the road to an understanding of military science began with the study of military history." <sup>7</sup>

So strong were Swift's convictions regarding history that he was moved to write in 1910 that "if we accept the idea that the principal aim of our military education is to collect individual

experience we will at once be struck with the importance of turning first to the experience of others before we consider our own." <sup>8</sup> He contended that "the study of our own history is particularly valuable because it leads us to form our own theory of the art of war, based upon our own experience and limited by our own resources. It enables us better to appreciate our own difficulties and to provide for meeting them in case of emergency." He concluded his thoughts on the value of history in the curriculum by saying "the formation of independent decisions upon historical events builds up the self reliance of officers and sooner or later forms a habit of dealing with great questions with firmness and confidence." <sup>9</sup>

During this period others besides military men were advocating the review of history and the need to systematically prepare our officers in peace for the next war. The Army received its biggest support from the Secretary of War, Hon. Elihu Root, who stated in 1903, at ceremonies commemorating laying the cornerstone of the Army War College building in Washington, that "the officer who keeps his mind alert by intellectual exercise, and who systematically studies the reasons of action and the materials and conditions and difficulties with which he may have to deal, will be the stronger practical man and the better soldier." <sup>10</sup>

The Army War College by almost any standards had a modest beginning. When the nine officers of the first class reported in 1904, the course consisted of national and tactical problems relating to defense, special studies relating to the

organization, equipment and transportation of land forces, and twenty-six lectures on various military subjects. The second annual session (1905 - 1906) was for the most part a mirror image of the first. Seven officers would consider three problems of national defense; review four special studies for the general staff; and receive several lectures. Little academic work was accomplished in those initial years of the War College; however, the spirit of the founding of this institution was adhered to as the officers "learned by doing." <11>

It was not until "Major" Eben Swift was assigned to the general staff in Washington, with duty as an instructor at the War College in 1908, that the College began to set a pattern for the curriculum used during the years preceding World War I. Swift arrived on the scene in August of that year armed with years of experience as an instructor at Fort Leavenworth, where he served twice and rose to the position of Assistant Commandant of the General Service and Staff College. He wasted no time in instituting several changes to the curriculum of the War College in time to influence the third class (1906 - 1907). He complemented his love for history with his belief in the "applicatory method" or deductive system of educating officers. That is, he advocated a logical systematic exposure of principles using military history and studying campaigns and battlefields to learn the military profession. <12> He recognized that this method was more time-consuming than others; however he felt the results would be more lasting.

As a student of history, Swift also had the benefit of

knowing the Germans had been using map maneuvers and war games for years very successfully. Their regulations at the time confirmed this: "The war game, tactical problems, lectures, winter essays, and tactical rides all contribute to the mental training of officers. The war game and tactical problems awaken interest in the study of regulations, of tactics, and of military history, and afford opportunities for practice in forming decisions rapidly." <13> Swift had the advantage of knowing this early in his career because in 1897 he translated "A Contribution to the War Game," published in 1878 by Colonel von Verdy du Vernois, then Chief of Staff of the 1st German Army Corps. <14>

One of the main reasons that Major Swift was so successful in implementing many reforms to the curriculum was because he enjoyed the support of the new Chief of Staff of the Army, Major General J. Franklin Bell. Earlier, Swift had been Bell's disciple when Bell was commandant at Fort Leavenworth in 1903. The two would have a profound effect on the War College between 1906 - 1910. <15>

The program developed during this period was one that centered around the individual student officer. The philosophy undergirding the course work could be found in the original charter for the War College: General Order 115 (27 June 1904) which stated "The object of the War College is not to impart academic instruction, but to make a practical application of military knowledge already acquired." <16> Major subjects included: military organizations, strategy, historical battles,

tactics, campaign planning, military history, logistics and terrain analysis. Lectures, committee analyses, map problems, map maneuvers, and tactical rides were the media of instruction. The course also included a critical study of approved operational plans in the field, with a view toward validating or recommending change. Subjects and methods, as well as sequences of study, were designed to assist the officers in creating a mental frame of reference as early as possible in the year. Applications of this learning would be sought during field exercises over actual terrain during the latter part of the year. <17>

The first course taught during these years was devoted to solutions to military strategic and tactical problems to be solved on maps. This was a good beginning because it was as logical then as it is today; any operation is likely to begin with a thorough map reconnaissance. Based upon actual strategic war plans, students studied each concept of operation and reported on the proposed feasibility. The tactical exercises on the map posed problems covering various military situations. Some of the map problems were under assumed conditions, while others used historical examples as a means of gleaning lessons learned. Major Swift introduced 31 such problems during his first year at the War College. His map problems gradually increased in difficulty from calling on basic tactical theory to the more complex strategic orientation. These problems allowed the officers to obtain early experience with difficulties encountered in the conduct of military operations. <18>

After the map problem came the map maneuver. This was an

extension of the map problem on a larger scale. It was an exercise to show movement of forces over the surface of a map. It was in fact a precursor to what we now call the Command Post Exercise. This so-called "battle exercise" required students to replicate all the decision making necessary to carry on a major campaign. The map maneuvers provided an opportunity to familiarize officers with:

- Factors of time and space.
- Military geography and map reading.
- Relationship between forces and terrain.
- Rates of March.
- Offensive operations.
- Defensive operations.
- The formulation of plans.
- Scheme of maneuver.
- Disposition of forces.
- Strategies tested by maneuver on a map.
- Critique / discussion groups.

Here again historical examples and campaigns were used to sustain interest in and complement the study of military history. The instructors, especially Major Swift, tried to impress upon the students the lessons to be gained from studying these details of military art. "Historical incidents can generally be found to illustrate almost any kind of a principle", he would preach. Student solutions to these exercises involved a written statement of the problem; recommended solutions carried out by correct military maneuvers; the issuance of appropriate orders; with all solutions documented by schematics on a map. Finally the map maneuver served the following purposes:

- "1. It supplements previous exercises by practice in map reading.

2. It has the advantage of presenting the whole situation and not a limited portion of it to the view.
3. It gives practice in issuing, interpreting and executing orders.
4. It gives practice in showing the principles and applications of strategy and tactics. In the same way it is a useful adjunct to the study of military history.
5. It gives practice in making quick and accurate decisions. In the application of principles it shows in a few hours operations what would ordinarily consume many days." <19>

During the winter months many lectures were given by members of the staff and faculty as well as distinguished visitors and guests who happened to be in the Washington area. The standing lectures seemed to divide themselves naturally into the following categories:

- a. The Development of Modern War
  - a series of 13 lectures tracing the rise of the art of war
- b. Tactics
  - a course of five lectures on the use of combined arms
- c. History
  - three lectures on campaigns of the Civil War
- d. Law
  - a course of five lectures covering international law and legal aspects of the Army in the field
- e. Naval War
  - a course of five lectures on the cooperation of the Army and Navy
- f. Administration and supply
  - a course of nine lectures regarding supplying and caring for the Army in the field

The list of lectures conducted during the year provides additional insight into the curriculum:

<u>SUBJECT</u>	<u>AUTHOR</u>
The Tactical Use of Cavalry . . . . Field Artillery in Cooperation	Major Eben Swift

with the other arms . . . . .	Captain Fox Conner
The Infantry Attack . . . . .	Captain Frank Cocheu
Panama . . . . .	Hon. Edwin Denby (Member of Congress)
Adm Alfred Mahan	
Major Eben Swift	
Naval Strategy . . . . .	
The Battle of Shiloh - 1st Day . . . . .	
Plan for Furnishing Arms, Ammunition and Equipments	
Army in Case of War . . . . .	Major John Thompson
Subsisting our Field Army in Case of War . . . . .	
Engineer Services for the Army . . . . .	Gen. H.G. Sharpe
Signal Corps Operations . . . . .	Major Joseph Kuhn
	Major Charles McK. Saltzman
First Battle of Bull Run (discussed on the ground) . . . . .	Major Eben Swift
Coast Defenses . . . . .	Col E.M. Weaver
Army and Navy in War . . . . .	Capt Peter Harris
Infantry Fire in Battle . . . . .	Lt. Col. R.K. Evans
The Development of Modern Strategy: Influence of Ruse & Stratagem . . . . .	Major Eben Swift
The Development of Modern Strategy: Influence of Drill & Discipline . . . . .	Major Eben Swift
The Development of Modern Strategy: Influence of Terrain as shown in the Campaign of Napoleon . . . . .	Major Eben Swift
The Development of Modern War: Influence of the Defense . . . . .	Capt S.A. Cheney
The Influence of Fortifications as shown by the Manchurian Campaign of 1904 - 05 . . . . .	Capt S.A. Cheney
The Care of Wounded in War . . . . .	Col V. Havard
The Development of Modern Strategy: Influence of Terrain as shown in the Campaign of Lee . . . . .	Major Eben Swift
Naval Supply . . . . .	George P. Dyer
Kriegspiel or Map Maneuvers . . . . .	Major Eben Swift
The Development of Modern Strategy: Influence of Peace Training as shown in the Campaign of Metz & Sedan . . . . .	Major Eben Swift
The Military Aspect of the Hague Conference . . . . .	Gen Geo Davis
The Development of Modern Strategy: Influence of Peace Training as shown in the Battle of Liaoyang	Major Eben Swift
International Law in the Field . . . . .	Major D.H. Boughton
The Development of Modern Strategy: Influence of Peace Training as shown in the Battle of the Shaho	Major Eben Swift
The Development of Modern Strategy: Influence of Peace Training as shown in the Battle of Mukden . . . . .	Major Eben Swift <20>

The types of lectures presented along with the specific authors during this era reveal several interesting facts. Most noteworthy is the degree to which Major Swift would go to weave historical examples into the major instructional categories. This list also reveals the kinds of subjects they were interested in and the level to which they were pitched. The subjects were far more specific and oriented towards tactics as opposed to the operational level of war. The topics were also conducive to the small group discussions that were carried on during this time. Finally, the authors or lecturers most of whom were on the staff and faculty, are also worthy of noting in that they include some military personnel who would later on make significant contributions to their country. Besides Major Eben Swift who would eventually rise to the rank of Major General, there was Captain Fox Conner. Conner would become chief of operations at Pershing's headquarters in France during World War I, would rise to the rank of Major General, and become a profound student of warfare. General Conner would also become a mentor to Dwight Eisenhower in his early years. Eisenhower would later write that Conner "has held a place in my affections for many years that no other, not even a relative, could obtain." <21> Admiral Alfred Mahan on the other hand was at the end of a long and distinguished career in the Navy. He had been president of the Naval War College in 1888, retired as a rear admiral in 1898, returned to duty as a member of the Naval War Board in the War with Spain in 1898, and was a prolific speaker and writer of more than 120 articles and 20 books on current naval policy and

strategy. <22>

At this point however, the curriculum for the War College was not much different than what had taken place at the service schools for years. The principles of war were still being taught in the classroom, albeit with a historical search for validation. In addition, enough contemporary subjects were introduced to continue to satisfy those who felt the need to prepare the officers for their next assignment. In other words, "theory" surely got into the curriculum. What was missing was the "practice", or application of theory. While the map maneuver satisfied some of this requirement, that training was still accomplished indoors with little real-life drama. The founding fathers of the War College, Major Eben Swift especially, persisted in voicing the need for a capstone to the course -- something that would expose the officers to "how" the strategist thought in given situations. The Staff and Historical Rides would fill this void.

Eventually, the months of May and June were set aside each year for this purpose. Different types of exercises and rides were conducted by the Germans, British and French during the latter part of the 18th Century. Some confusion comes from the fact that early authors would refer to the different exercises in a generic fashion rather than specifically. These "rides" were first referred to interchangeably as war rides, staff rides, terrain exercises, tactical rides, battlefield studies, and historical rides. I am most interested in the difference between the Tactical and Staff Ride (used interchangeably today) and the

Historical Ride. The Tactical Ride began as a series of short, one or two day day trips, interspersed throughout the year to transfer or reinforce the tactical principles studied in the classroom. They were used by each arm of the service for inserting practical examples and exploiting conditions of the terrain into the training program. These rides were introduced in fact as early as the fall, to avoid what was termed a bad "map habit". On these rides, the entire class would proceed to a nearby location, usually a Civil War battle site. The battlefields of Fredericksburg and Chancellorsville Campaign and the Richmond Campaign of 1864 provided favorite locations for these day trips.

At these historic sites, each officer was given a set of problems related to the terrain or important phase of the particular battle or campaign. Officers would then, in turn, give their solutions to the entire class. This part was usually conducted orally, without reference to the map. The concept was to work out the problems together in the open, thereby gaining an appreciation of the relationship between the map orientation in the classroom and the ground orientation. <23> Judging from the diaries kept during the rides, these indeed became the catalyst of the course and were enthusiastically received by the members of the class. "No officer who took these staff rides failed to appreciate their immense advantages mentally and physically." <24>

Borrowed from our British cousins, the staff ride on the other hand was initially set up to train staff officers in the routine duties they could expect to perform in a campaign or

extended war. <25> They were longer than the Tactical Ride. Usually four exercises were planned each spring, most lasting between two to four days. These rides tended to be broader in scope and included duties of general staff officers and those of higher commanders. The concept of the operation was usually presented with no formal orders and from this the students would formulate, as staff members, their own orders as if in a campaign. The rides had the added benefit of exposing the officers to the routines and functions they could expect while serving with troops in the field. Each staff ride involved overnight encampments, which placed the officer students in varying duty positions conducting a hypothetical campaign over the Virginia and Maryland countryside. <26> A detail of officers would usually ride out and select the best terrain, given the set of circumstances presented. Some of the practical lessons available during these outings were:

- best selection of terrain given the mission
- appreciation of planning logistical support
- care and accountability of forces in the field
- practice in reporting information to troops
- best defense of a built up area
- conduct of a river crossing
- maximizing the use of terrain during an operation

Students would take their responsibilities as staff officers seriously and would issue orders accordingly. Colonel John A. Lejeune, while a member of the class of 1810 and acting as the chief of staff gave the following orders to the chief surgeon: "The crossing of Accotink Creek has been forced and the enemy is in retreat leaving 100 wounded in the field. 125 of this div

have been wounded. You will establish a dressing station and Field Hosp. at Annandale and take charge of the wounded. Detail a med. off. to supervise the policing of the battlefield." <27> (Colonel Lejeune was the first Marine officer to attend the Army War College and later became the first commandant of the Marine Corps.)

According to the course description at the time, "The months of May and June will be devoted to the study of some of the great campaigns of the Civil War. The campaigns will first be studied at the War College and officers assigned for independent discussion of important phases of each. The officers will then ride over the country covered by the campaign, the history will be recited, the ground studied and the modern application will be made to the historical situation." <28> Thus, the Historical Ride, as it became known, was instituted to provide the capstone of the work done at the War College. In contrast to the shorter rides of between 100 to 300 miles, the Historical Rides were from 400 to 500 miles away. They also called for overnight bivouacs of up to two to three weeks in length. Frequently the Secretary of War accompanied by the president of the Army War College would join the student party during these rides to participate for up to 2 - 3 days. <28>

To prepare for the ride, each student was assigned a special study in connection with the particular battle or campaign and other important points of interest to consider along the route. Following a personal reconnaissance of the battlefield, each officer would then report to the class, assessing the various

military aspects of the campaign or battle. "In his presentation, the primary strategic objects of the campaign were clearly set forth, the strategic objectives of the respective commanders described in detail, and the reasons for the strategic and tactical successes or failures traced to their original source." <30> In 1910 during a visit to Seven Pines, Virginia, Lieutenant Colonel Hunter Liggett discussed the battle of Frazier's Farm and the battle at Savage Station. During his discussion he gave a complete analysis of the terrain indicating key areas and the advantages and disadvantages of the employment and positioning of forces. (LTC Liggett, a student at the time, would stay on at the War College to instruct and replace Major Swift as one of the directors. His career culminated in the command of the First American Army Corps in France with the rank of Lieutenant General.) <31> These lessons having been learned the students were then asked to assess the course of the battle given "the changed conditions of modern warfare." <32> The current weather conditions on June 11, 1910 caused Major W.C. Brown to record: "Owing to heavy rain last evening Bull Run ford's impracticable at present but likely will not remain so long. Suggest postponement of attack until Bull Run can be forded." <33>

Typical of the Historical Rides conducted at the War College prior to World War I were the ones conducted in the spring of 1908. Two extended rides were conducted that year: the first covered the Antietam Campaign (11-18 May 1908); and the second was a ride through Virginia covering the theater of operations

during the Civil War known as the Wilderness Campaign (2-23 June 1908). All rides would begin and end at Fort Myer, Virginia, following approval of a request to the Commanding Officer, Fort Myer, for escorts and equipment. For example, the following men and equipment were assigned from Fort Myer on 11 May 1908:

- "- 1 Officer and 16 men as escort.
- 2 wagons, with teams and drivers.
- 18 saddle horses, with equipments.
- 18 meat ration cans, knives, forks spoons and tin cups.
- 18 Gold Medal cots.
- 8 g.i. buckets.
- 9 wall tents, poles and pins." <34>

In addition to the equipment furnished by Fort Myer, the officers carried with them a bedding roll and a valise suit case. Other items that the officers carried were a message book, memorandum pads, pencils, compass, watch, and field glasses.

To prepare the students for the ride, the following orders and carefully worked itinerary were issued regarding the Antietam trip:

"During the staff ride to the battlefield of Antietam it is proposed to assign special studies to officers in connection with the campaign and other points of interest on the route. A portion of the program will consist in having a lecture on the ground by each of the officers named, giving the incidents of the historical case. This will preferably be entirely oral and without reference to maps. It is desirable that the historical case be supplemented by tactics of the battlefield and a statement as to the modifying conditions as they would be today for the three arms, supposing that the forces available were the same as in the historical case.

The students followed this itinerary:

Leave Fort Myer, May 11th.  
Camp at Rockville, May 11th - 18 miles.  
Camp at Monocacy, May 12th - 24 miles.  
Camp at Kittoctan Creek, May 13th - 15 miles.

Visit Turner's Gap on the 13th and discuss the battle.  
Camp at Antietam Creek May 14th - 20 miles.  
Visit Fox's Gap and Crampton's Gap and discuss battlefield on May 14th.  
Camp at Antietam Creek, May 15th.  
Visit the Dunkard Church May 15th, and discuss battlefield at that point on the 15th.  
Camp at Antietam Creek, May 16th.  
Visit the center and Burnside's Bridge May 16th, and discuss battlefield on the 16th.  
Solution of problems, May 17th.  
Return by rail to Washington, May 18th." <35>

Each officer was assigned a special study regarding some aspect of the campaign and reported to the class accordingly. Some of the special assignments included:

Turner's Gap:

- The attack and defense

Fox's Gap:

- The attack and defense

Crampton's Gap:

- The attack and defense

Battle of Antietam:

- Hooker's attack
- Jackson's defense
- Mansfield's attack
- Sumner's attack
- Burnside's attack
- Hill's counterattack
- Longstreet's defense

Participation in the second Historical Ride for the class of 1908 was similar in structure and organization to the first. This ride took the students over the Virginia countryside into areas such as the Wilderness Battlefield, Spotsylvania, North Anna, Totopotomoy and Cold Harbor. This ride lasted 22 days, from 2-23 June 1908. <36>

By 1910 the Army had adopted the idea of the staff ride throughout the Army Service School system. (Hereafter the term generically includes all forms of the tactical exercise). Instructors were strongly encouraged to include staff rides in

their programs of instruction. They were informed that the rides were "clammed as second only to field maneuvers as a means of instruction in tactics." <sup>37</sup> Experience had taught that "the rides did provide training akin to a student's participation in an actual campaign during wartime which had been the normal basis for obtaining military knowledge." <sup>38</sup> Those early pioneers had documented several advantages that complemented the classroom instruction. For instance, students had a better understanding and an appreciation regarding:

- Practice in scouting and reconnaissance
- Selection of battle formations
- The need for more theoretical study
- Importance of detail in the military art
- Lessons to be learned from military history
- Military geography in a campaign
- Rapid decision making
- The weaknesses of relying solely on a map
- Troop leading procedures

Few changes were made to the staff ride for the remainder of the years prior to World War I. The methodology of integrating history and lectures with the study of battlefields on the ground proved sound. We can reasonably conclude that in addition to the stated purpose, the staff ride provided a reasonable and consistent habit of examining military questions. It established a routine way of applying or practicing a given set of principles. In other words, it taught a generation of officers how to think, not what to think.

The need to practice the profession of war in peacetime remains as acute today as it was in 1903. Today we find that military history once again occupies its place in the curriculum of the War College. The "staff" ride has also crept into the

studies on a voluntary basis. We applaud those with such vision. To the critics who insist we are preparing for the battle that will never come, we respond; let us decide which course of action or plan was best. The historical campaigns and operations have stood the test of "practice" by generations of professionals and the benefit of criticism and discussion over the years. The intellectual thought that results is more important than the mere review of an old historic battle that can never again be fought.

We must be reminded that Major Eben Swift concluded his experience and contribution to the War College in 1910, well before World Wars I and II, and Grenada. He observed that "It is well settled that the wars of the future will be conducted by peace-trained soldiers, commanded by peace-trained generals, assisted by a peace-trained staff. They take the field with as much serenity and confidence as if they were veterans of a hundred battles. And, strange as it may seem, they carry on war far more efficiently than any other set of men who ever lived. Someone has called it a "barrack begotten art of war." That is what it is. It places mediocrity above genius, it gives control to men who do nothing brilliant, but who make no mistakes, and it deeply buries much of the romance that clings about our profession. But it is the modern development of war." <38>

Perhaps Major Swift is speaking to us today, when in 1907 he reminded his students during a lecture on a Napoleonic Campaign: "Here then we have another brilliant example of the study of principles by their application. 'Study attentively,' says Napoleon, 'the campaigns of the great masters.' That wise

advice was not understood for a long time. It was his own practice, as we now know, but the added importance of the study of military history in the curriculum of the war college is a recent idea." <40>

## ENDNOTES

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33. War College Course 1909-1910, Vol V, p. 85.
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37. Sayre, p. 160.
38. Stansfield, p. 38.
39. Swift, p. 298.
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